(b) the remedial steps taken/proposed to be taken in regard thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI MD. ALI ASHRAF FATMI): (a) and (b) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the Sabha.

Funding gap for Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Mid Day Meal Scheme

377. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government are facing a huge funding gap of Rs. 12,000 crores in implementing the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and the Mid Day Meal Scheme over the next five years, even though it would mop up an estimated Rs. 28,000 crores through the additional impost of the 2 per cent cess on all Central taxes for the purpose; and

(b) if so, the steps Government propose to take to bridge the gap and to ensure that SSA programme is implemented with full vigour?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI MD. ALI ASHRAF FATMI): (a) The issue of future requirements of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Mid-Day Meal (MDM) programmes will be examined by the Planning Commission as part of its Mid-Term Appraisal exercise for the Tenth Five Year Plan. If the exercise reveals that the cess alone is insufficient to fully meet the needs of these programmes, additional resources may have to be found for them. It is noteworthy that external -assistance to the tune of Rs. 4700 crores has already been mobilized for SSA for the period 2003-07.

(b) Extensive financial and other support is being provided to State Government to enable them to vigorously implement Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan.

Opening of New Central Universities

378. SHRI LALIT SURI: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is a proposal under Government's consideration to open two new Central Universities in Manipur and the other at Allahabad by converting the existing State Universities; and

(b) if so, by when the exercise in this regard is likely to be completed and legislations on the subject to be introduced in Parliament?